FOXBOROUGH – Monday, December 30, 2013 – Massachusetts Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Rick Sullivan today announced more than $1.3 million in investments for parks, open space and recreation in six southeast region communities. Secretary Sullivan made the announcements in Foxborough where a Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) grant will fund road, parking and field improvements to Payson Road Recreation Area.

“The Patrick Administration is committed to improving our parks and open spaces across the Commonwealth,” said Secretary Sullivan. “In addition to preserving open space, improving recreational opportunities and protecting the Commonwealth’s natural resources, these investments will create economic growth across the region.”

In addition to Foxborough, Fall River received a PARC grant for its Maplewood Park Acquisition Project, to acquire three parcels of land. The PARC Program (formerly the Urban Self-Help Program) was established in 1977 to assist cities and towns in acquiring and developing land for park and outdoor recreation purposes. Any community with an up-to-date Open Space and Recreation Plan is eligible to apply for the program.

Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) grants totaling more than nearly $1 million were awarded to Attleboro, Hanson, Mendon, and Norton. Since 1961, LAND grants have helped cities and towns acquire land for conservation and outdoor recreational uses. To qualify for the reimbursement grants, communities must fund projects upfront and the protected open space must be open to the public.

Complete list of projects and their descriptions by community.

Strengthening the Patrick Administration’s commitment to urban park investments, Secretary Sullivan announced a new grant program aimed at building a playground or spray park in each of the Commonwealth’s 54 cities. The Our Common Backyards grant program will help cities create or renovate parks in the neighborhoods that need them most. Each city is eligible to receive up to $200,000 in grant assistance. The Our Common Backyards grant application will be available on Comm-pass and the EEA website soon. The following Southeast communities are eligible for this new program: Attleboro, Braintree, Brockton, Fall River, Franklin, New Bedford, Quincy, Randolph, Taunton and Weymouth.

Since taking office, Governor Deval Patrick has made a historic investment of more than $300 million in land conservation focused on three goals: investing in urban parks, preserving working farms and forests and protecting large natural landscapes for habitat. This investment has resulted in the permanent protection of more than 110,000 acres of land and the renovation or creation of more than 170 parks. The new parks and open space created are within a ten minute walk of 1.5 million residents – about a quarter of
the Commonwealth’s residents.